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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 KUWAIT 003771

SIPDIS

FOR NEA/ARPI, INR, AND INR/B

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KU](#) [PINR](#)

SUBJECT: AMIR'S SON ALLEGES CONSPIRACY TO OUST HIS FATHER
AND THE CROWN PRINCE

REF: A. KUWAIT 3635

[B](#). KUWAIT 3580

[C](#). KUWAIT 3391

Classified By: Ambassador Richard LeBaron for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

[1](#). (S) Summary and Comment: An Al-Sabah ruling family member and son of the Amir recently asked PolChief to join him on a walk through his garden during which he railed against the Prime Minister, accusing him of manipulating his power and position to force the Amir and Crown Prince out of office. He said most Kuwaitis expected the PM to eventually become Amir and it was disrespectful for him to encourage the Amir to take an "early retirement in Geneva." The Shaykh spoke of a definite rift in the ruling family, but in contrast to press reports, it was not between the Jaber and Salem branches, rather it was among the old guard and the young Turks of the Jaber line in a struggle for control of family resources. As one of the Amir's many sons, the Shaykh has a clear bias, but Post believes his criticisms of his uncle the PM genuinely stem from what he considers to be improper behavior and not anger or disappointment that his own political future is at stake. In fact, as head of an extraneous government body, his career has most likely peaked, a common assessment among Post contacts and something the Shaykh himself seems to realize. The Shaykh does not seem to disapprove of the ultimate ascendancy of PM Shaykh Sabah, rather his concerns center on the manner in which he becomes Amir and the exclusion of the extended family in the process. End Summary and Comment.

Crown Prince Returns Renewing Interest in Succession

[2](#). (S) Crown Prince Shaykh Sa'ad returned to Kuwait October 28 following a month of medical treatment in the UK. His return has renewed interest in the succession issue, with some observers arguing that his return reunites the ruling family, thus enabling it to reach a final decision on who will succeed the ailing, elderly leaders and when. Commenting on succession, one of the Amir's sons pulled PolChief aside at a recent diwaniya to express his displeasure at what he considers the machinations of Prime Minister Shaykh Sabah to assume the amirship. The Shaykh reported that the PM has coveted the position for years and is only acting now because of his own advancing age and not because of the worsening conditions of both the Amir and CP. It is a fact that the PM is the de facto ruler of Kuwait; therefore, said the Shaykh, there is no real reason to seek the Amir's or the CP's abdication. In fact, the Shaykh claimed that the PM, with the assistance of current Deputy National Guard head Shaykh Mish'al, was behind the 2003 decision to remove the PM portfolio from the CP. He explained that Shaykh Mish'al, younger brother of both the Amir and the PM, was subsequently rewarded with the National Guard. He also said the CP's recent visit to London was not voluntary. He alleged that Mish'al, assisted by his brother Interior Minister Shaykh Nawaf, forcibly removed the CP from his home and sent him to London, fully expecting him not to return. The Shaykh bitterly said such action was unnecessary since everyone knows the CP "is finished." (Note: The Ambassador attended the CP's November 1 Ramadan diwaniya and observed that the CP, while in much better physical health than the Amir, is not in command of his mental faculties. End Note.)

Survival of the Fittest: The PM vs. the Amir

[3](#). (S) The Shaykh was particularly upset following the October 26 opening of the National Assembly. According to the Constitution, the Amir opens each session of the National Speech with what amounts to a state of the union address. He may delegate the PM to deliver the speech, as was the case on the 26th. The Shaykh complained that the deliberate care with which his father was ushered into the assembly hall, the mussing of his "ghutra" (white headdress) and the slowness with which it was readjusted, as well as the lengthy address delivered by the PM were attempts to highlight the differences between the still healthy PM and the frail Amir.

He said everyone knows the Amir is not well and the PM sought to discredit and embarrass him. It would have been better, argued the Shaykh, to let his father say a few words to declare the session opened and forego the long speech. (Note: In fact, the Amir did whisper the words opening the session, with some audible coaching from aides. End Note.)

All in the Family

14. (S) The Shaykh added that the PM and his sons (Shaykh Naser, an economic adviser in the PM's office, and Shaykh Hamad, a businessman) control most of the extended family's extensive financial wealth and the PM now seeks to consolidate wealth and political power in one distinct lineage. (Note: Observers in Kuwait rate Shaykh Sabah and his sons among the top five wealthiest families. End Note.) The Shaykh also mentioned rumors that the PM intended to name Naser as CP, but reported other older family members, such as Mish'al, balked.

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LeBaron